



Security Council

Distr.: General
1 April 2003
English
Original: French

Letter dated 31 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you the address to the nation delivered by the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Pierre Buyoya, on 29 March 2003 to announce that the rotation of political power planned for 1 May 2003 would indeed take place (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as documents of the Security Council.

(Signed) Marc Nteturuye
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 31 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

My dear compatriots,

At the end of 2002 and at the beginning of this year, we had the opportunity to give you an up-to-date account of the progress made in the peace process. At the same time, we described to you the evolution of such major subjects of concern as the implementation of the Arusha Agreement and, in particular, the signing and implementation of the ceasefire. Today, we should like to take up again another very important question, the issue of the rotation of the Presidency. We have been conducting consultations on this issue for some time with all political partners; these consultations have yielded positive results. The time has therefore come to convey our conclusions to you.

First, we should like to point out that the issue of rotating the Presidency is addressed in the Transitional Constitution. The issue was raised when Burundians exchanged views on the transitional institutions. Moreover, it is even referred to in article 80 of the Transitional Constitution as stated previously. In our address to the nation and the leaders of institutions on 28 February 2003, we invited Burundian political actors to discuss this issue of rotation and to conclude their debate this month.

During this debate, which has lasted several days, two groups have emerged. In the first group's view, the question should be stated in these terms: is it possible to have a rotation of the Presidency on 1 May this year? What will become of the other agreements reached, particularly those on the cessation of hostilities and the implementation of the ceasefire? This same group wondered whether it would not be advisable to put back the deadline for the rotation in order to deal with this issue at the same time as the other major subjects of concern.

As to the second group, it asserted the principle of implementation of the Transitional Constitution. The peace process being fairly advanced, nothing, in this group's opinion, should prevent the rotation from taking place.

This, in simple terms, is how the two groups expressed their positions on this issue. But, dialogue having already become one of our habits in administering the affairs of the State, we did not depart from this sound approach and our final decision on this issue of rotation was reached after broad consultations. For our part, we sounded out several political partners, the leaders of the political parties, the members of the Government and others. We initiated consultations with the leaders of the Republic's institutions, the President of the National Assembly, the President of the Senate and the Vice-President of the Republic. Together, we analysed in depth what would happen in the country in the event the Presidency was rotated and in the event it was not. We also listened attentively to those foreign partners that, as a rule, closely follow the peace process in our country.

The decision finally agreed is to proceed with the rotation of the Presidency on the planned date, that is, on 1 May 2003. As a corollary, the country's future leaders — namely, the President of the Republic (the current Vice-President) and his Vice-President (who will be appointed in accordance with article 99 of the Transitional Constitution) — will have to make commitments in order to reassure

those Burundians who have expressed concerns and have serious doubts about the rotation. These commitments have been determined and adopted by consensus. They have just been signed in the presence of witnesses, as was done at the beginning of the first half of the transition period.

It would be impossible to review all the commitments here. However, the principal measures are as follows. Firstly, at the political level discussions must be concluded in order to reassure all Burundians on such matters as:

- Adoption of the law suppressing the crime of genocide and other crimes against humanity;
- Respect for the power-sharing elements of the Arusha Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation;
- Continuation of action on requests of the International Judicial Commission of Inquiry on genocide and other crimes committed in Burundi and of the International Criminal Court.

Secondly, on the question of security:

- Negotiations must be continued with a view to implementing the ceasefire and ensuring that the Vice-President has the authority to sign important security decisions;
- The defence and security forces must be given sufficient resources to maintain peace and security, and additional resources if the war continues.

These are the major agreed commitments linked to the decision to proceed with rotation of the Presidency. To sum up, these points represent the outcome of days spent in consultation on the rotation issue. I take this opportunity officially to thank those who participated for their good sense.

We should now like to ask all Burundians to support this decision. Yesterday's consultations on the rotation issue took account of both the current political situation and national interests. This decision to endorse them thus ushers in a new stage in implementation of the peace agreement.

Furthermore, the announcement of this decision must not be a source of division, fear, concern or despair for Burundians. We instead urge Burundians to remain calm and to give the decision their positive support. This is particularly important now in this complicated economic situation, even if a better future is probably just over the horizon.

We call on Burundian political actors, all institutions and their officials, to set a good example by promoting this supportive behaviour. We also ask Burundians to show continued solidarity at this time, to close ranks with their leaders and defence and security forces and to keep up efforts to seek and maintain peace and security. Let no one use this decision on rotation as an excuse to undermine the country's security, to spread fear among the people or, even more emphatically, to prevent officials in their various departments from going about their daily duties.

To conclude, we wish to state that we shall for our part respect this decision on rotation. As well as being the first to respect the decision, we shall explain to Burundians that it does not harm one side's interests but, instead, constitutes a very important stage of the peace process. My most ardent wish is that this stage should

bring stability and hope for all Burundians. May it spare them from the miseries and misfortunes of war. May it restore the strengths that Burundians are capable of summoning up together and, as they remain together, provide solutions to all their present and future problems. I thank you.
